



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Voyageurs National Park

3131 Highway 53  
International Falls, MN  
56649-8956

218-283-9821 phone  
218-285-7407 fax

---

## Voyageurs National Park News Release

May 10, 2007

For Immediate Release

Lee Grim (218) 283- 9821

### BALD EAGLE NESTING AREAS PROTECTED IN VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

Each year since 1992, the park has temporarily closed the land and water areas around active bald eagle nests to visitor use during their critical nesting periods. The closures have been based on recommendations of bald eagle researchers from across the U.S. to land management agencies. After the young leave the nest, which usually occurs by the middle of August, these temporarily closed park areas are reopened for public use.

For the 2007 breeding season, 12 of the park's 25 nesting sites occupied by breeding pairs are temporarily closed to campers and other human activities.

Four of the park's 235 developed visitor use sites are affected by the temporary closures:

Namakan Lake

Sexton Island campsite (N62)

Hamilton Island East campsite (N11)

Rainy Lake

Skipper Rock Island houseboat site (R45)

Sand Bay South houseboat site (R25)

Eight undeveloped areas that visitors might use where active breeding pairs are nesting are also closed to human activity and marked with signs. The closed undeveloped areas are:

Kabetogama Lake

East Northland Island

North Wood Duck Island Beach

West Cemetery Island Beach

West Sphunge Island Inlet

Richie Island

Rainy Lake

East Fox Island Inlet

North Diamond Island

Red Rock Island

(more)

Specific management recommendations from a two year research study on the effects of watercraft on bald eagles nesting in VNP (Wildlife Society Bulletin 2002) are being applied for the third consecutive year. Therefore watercraft users, both motorized and non- motorized, must not approach on the water within 200 meters of bald eagle nesting sites and adjacent land areas during the closure period. Boaters are encouraged to not stop on the water within the 200 meters near nesting sites.

According to Clemson University bald eagle research biologist Dr. William Bowerman, who has conducted research studies of bald eagles in the park annually since 1989, people play a very important role in protecting nesting eagles and other birds. “May and June are particularly sensitive periods for nesting eagles. Eagles may still be incubating eggs until late May, and if flushed off the nest for too long a period, the eggs will become cold and the embryos can die. Or if the adults are continuously threatened, they may abandon their nesting efforts,” Dr. Bowerman added.

“Once hatched, it is during the first four weeks of life that the eaglets are most vulnerable,” Bowerman explained. “During this time eaglets are unable to regulate their body temperatures and need almost constant attention from an adult to protect them from cold winds and rain, or hot sunshine.”

On April 16, Voyageurs National Park biologists conducted the 35th annual spring aerial survey (1973- 2007) to determine the number and location of nesting Eagles. The survey revealed 59 bald eagle nests with 25 adult pairs observed at 25 nests. Twenty- four of the 25 breeding pairs were actively incubating eggs compared to 30 in 2006. Due to unusually cold weather, a follow-up flight will be conducted in early May to account for possible late nesters.

Sixty seven nests present in the late summer of 2006 were monitored this spring. Eight of 67 nests were gone this year either because nest trees blew down or nests fell from nest trees. One eagle pair was observed building a new nest on an island near a former nest that existed from 1990 through 1992. Eagles often have more than one nest in their breeding areas which are not used for nesting.

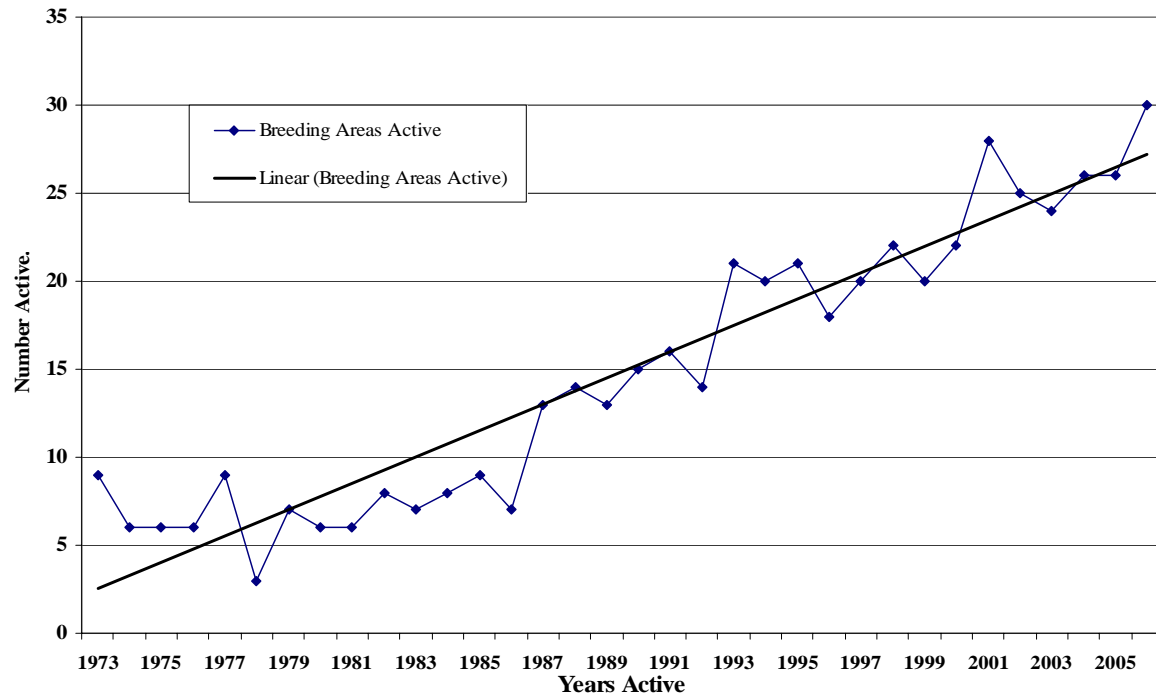
Biologists observed 24 such nests that were in good condition. Nine other inactive nests were in various states of disrepair and were not utilized. Eagles may not tend such nests for many years but may eventually return to the nest, refurbish and use it for nesting again.

Figure 1 graphs the changes in the number of active breeding pairs observed annually within the park boundary from the 1973 through 2006 breeding seasons. The linear trend shows a steady increase in active nesting pairs during the past 35 seasons. That trend along with a trend increase in the number of young fledged annually in the park is good news for both the eagles and the park’s visitors.

“Overall, we believe that reducing human presence around active bald eagle nesting sites has aided the nesting success of eagles in the park. Today there are more eagles for visitors to observe than at any time since the park was established. Our management goal is to help ensure the continued reproductive success and sustainability of the park’s population of bald eagles, our nation’s symbol,” said Superintendent Kate Miller.

(more)

Figure 1. Bald Eagle Breeding Areas with Active Nesting 1973-2006  
within Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota



- NPS-